

# **CENTRAL MARKETS PROJECT**

## **Common Transnational Strategy**

By Conservatory of Mediterranean Food

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## Introduction

The CENTRAL MARKETS project aims to enhance traditional markets by improving their management systems since these are places for commercial distribution with a strong social impact, producing positive effects in terms of urban development and environmental sustainability. The project seeks to elaborate strategies and measures for the re-discovery of markets as an engine for the development of urban districts. The general aim is to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the 8 target cities/regions by developing new and innovative market revitalization strategies in order to reinforce and balance the relationship between city/regions & markets. Four main elements are examined in depth by the project: integration of trade services and retail framework policies, cooperation among relevant stakeholders, revitalisation of markets and related urban or regional areas, the network of partner cities and regions benefiting from mutual learning principles.

In order to pursue its goals, the CENTRAL MARKETS project carried out the following actions:

- Analysis of the current legal and policy framework at Central Europe level to address decision makers and market operators and raise awareness on difficulties and threats created by the existing policy fragmentation. A draft transnational strategy has been developed and forms the basis of the following activities.
- Stakeholder involvement in the elaboration of structured action plans and in the implementation of Pilot Actions for the revitalisation of traditional markets in their communities.
- Transnational comparison of the action plans and evaluation of the Pilot Actions.

On the basis of the main project findings, the partnership has elaborated the Common Transnational Strategy for the revitalisation of traditional European markets. The Strategy will address policy makers, market operators, potential investors and consumers, in order to promote a new concept of city market capable of fostering a more balanced economic development of cities and their hinterlands for a competitive and sustainable growth of the Central Europe area.

## 1) General strategic lines

The market is a “place” where people, products, cultures, traditions, experiences and needs all come together. It is true that the market's heartbeat is the commercial activities which take place there, but, notwithstanding this, it must not be reduced to a mere “place of business”, but, rather, it must contribute to maintaining local identity by recovering culture and traditions. Viewing it from a purely commercial perspective can strip the market of its anthropological, cultural and social value, with the risk that it be relegated to the status of a “non-place”<sup>1</sup>, which, unlike the shopping centre, however, would suffer for the absence of a common vision and of a defined strategy which constitutes one of the main strengths of those “artificial” places of commerce/retail.

Creating an identity of “place” is what shopping centres have been endeavouring to do for some time now by incorporating recreational activities and services in order to attract and entertain the customers above and beyond what is available to buy. One of many such instances is to be found at Shopville “Le Gru” in Grugliasco, just outside Torino, where 180 retail units are complemented by a huge number of services, some of the most notable being, for example, the initiatives for children, which include an indoor amusement park, an outdoor Summer Camp as well as a whole series of games and free gifts. The space used by day for the children's Summer Camp, by night is home to a Festival which in 2014 reached its 9<sup>th</sup> edition and has become an important event on the city's cultural agenda<sup>2</sup>.

The capacity of shopping centres to create an identity of place is such that, in some cases, a real “product for tourists” has been generated which can attract tourists on equal terms with the museums or the great works of architecture or engineering. A prime example of this is “The Mall”, near Florence, which is now on the itinerary of many tourists visiting the Tuscan capital<sup>3</sup>. Markets too, naturally not all, but those which display the necessary “qualities”, can become genuine “products for tourists”, and this potential is well represented by a number of striking examples, the *Boqueria* (in Barcelona) being the most obvious. However, great care must be taken to avoid crossing the boundary between the market which attracts the tourists - but keeps intact its own identity of place, culture and tradition - and the market “for the tourists”<sup>4</sup>.

Against this backdrop, a highly competitive one moreover, it is necessary to focus strategies for the revitalisation of markets on a recovery of *identity, relations* and *history*. Just like other “places of commerce”<sup>5</sup> (urban commercial clusters, “natural” or “artificial” shopping centres, etc.), markets too are “complex systems” in which a plurality of mutually-interdependent players interact.

It is precisely this presence of a plurality of *stakeholders*<sup>6</sup> representing specific needs which makes it necessary to develop a “systemic vision” capable of orienting the behaviours of the various

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<sup>1</sup> Augé M., *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Verso, 1995, pp. 77-78: “*If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, than a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place*”. First published as *Non-Lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Editions du Seuil, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> [www.leg.ru.it](http://www.leg.ru.it) and [www.gruvillage.it](http://www.gruvillage.it).

<sup>3</sup> Fintoni S., *No limits. Presente e futuro del fashion marketing*, (No Limits. Present and Future of Fashion Marketing) FrancoAngeli, 2010, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> The creation of a “product for tourists” which includes the markets, but does not distort them, maintaining an “*Authentic “slice of life” of Krakow (and not a ready-made product for tourists)*”, is one of the priorities highlighted by Krakow.

<sup>5</sup> Regione Piemonte, *I luoghi del Commercio*, (The Places of Commerce) SOTRECO, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> The nature and the role of the various stakeholders who, in one capacity or another, are involved in the policies and strategies

parties (public and private, collective or individual) towards a pursuit of common aims and objectives.

Without doubt, the role of “director” which the individual Local Authority (according to the circumstances, Municipalities, Metropolitan Areas, Provinces, etc.), plays is crucial since the local distribution system is of considerable importance in terms of the local area's socio-economic policies.

It is undeniable that the development of “artificial places” of commerce (shopping centres, factory outlet centres, factory outlet villages, etc.) has considerably modified the landscape of the retail offer, in some cases leading to the desertification of entire urban areas, though more often to a drastic reduction in neighbourhood commercial services, especially those serving the “weaker” sections of the population (the elderly, those with reduced mobility, etc.). Where private initiative does not allow poorly-served or unserved areas to be covered adequately, it shall be the responsibility of Public Institutions, through appropriate guiding policies, to incentivise/disincentivise the establishment of commercial activities in particular locations.

The revitalisation of markets assumes, in this perspective, a key role, both in regaining competitiveness in areas with a significant commercial presence, and in the preservation of adequate local neighbourhood services.

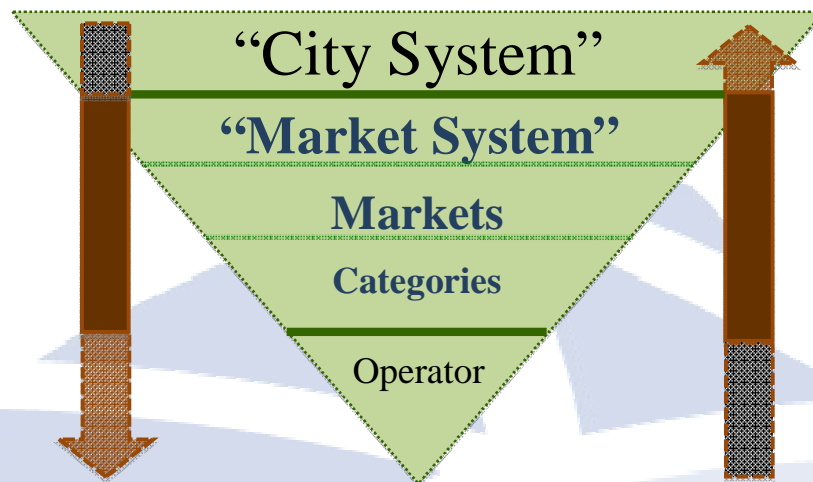
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concerning markets, are indicated in the WP3 core output “Report on the status of Central Europe Markets”, chapter 6: “The analysis of urban market governance systems”, p. 41.

## 2) Methodological approach

A valid process of strategic planning for the revitalisation of markets must be framed within a broader programme of general planning to be controlled at several different levels. The various levels of the planning process are outlined in figure 1.

Figure 1 – The levels of strategic planning



At the head of the entire process is the “city system” which in some cases is integrated into a broader supralocal system (consider, for instance, the Metropolitan Areas of Venice and Torino), in this connection the “regional vision” displayed by the markets of Ústí is significant. It is thus to this level that the guidelines must be delegated, in particular, the identification of the model of *governance* (see part 3.1 below) which best meets specific needs. At present, the various partners exhibit differing models of *governance*, largely based on a *top-down* decision-making process, with some (in particular, Bratislava, Maribor, Venice and Veszprém) expressing the need to strengthen a *bottom-up* approach<sup>7</sup> which involves to a greater extent the bottom end (the individual operators) and intermediate management or, where not provided for, representatives of the most involved stakeholders (professional associations, etc.).

The general strategies drawn up at the highest level must be adapted according to the specificities of the various markets. In situations where the markets are relatively few in number and homogeneous, collectively they can be considered a “single system” and homogeneous strategies can thus be defined. In those cases where there is a plurality of markets (Torino is a prime example of this) or where there are closed markets and outdoor ones, or where in any case they are differentiated by their target clientele, it is opportune to diversify strategies by identifying clusters which make it possible to manage their specificities<sup>8</sup>.

It is necessary, however, to maintain a permanent focus on the “specificities” presented by each market, and accordingly the strategies and operational plans for the different markets must be

<sup>7</sup> Indications which emerged in the course of the 4th Workshop, Krakow (Poland), 15th of May 2014.

<sup>8</sup> As regards the city of Torino, in the proposal for a reelaboration of the markets plan advanced by the Politecnico di Torino, a classification was adopted based on three parameters: size, performance and characterisation of the context. This classification has identified three groups of markets: excellent markets, average markets and struggling markets. This will allow specific courses of action to be developed.



based on the distinctive features of each of these (or of groups of these – clusters – if they exhibit the same characteristics). In particular, they must be distinguished on the basis of size, location and principal target clientele.

Diversifying strategies starts with the choice of the “categories of goods” which must make up the offer of every market. The market, as a “place of commerce”, in fact, is not merely a physical space occupied by a “certain number” of economic operators, but rather it must respond to needs of “supply” in relation to the “demand” principally gravitating around that place, or which the “quality of the offer” is able to attract. It thus becomes essential to delineate a decision-making process which leads to the composition of the “best range”, that is to say an attention to the classes of goods present, both quantitatively and, above all, qualitatively. Giving each market, in accordance with the guidelines defined at the higher levels, the choice of the composition of its goods, would allow the individual market to enhance its own characteristics and would increase the operators' sense of belonging.

Finally, it cannot, and must not, be forgotten that the “driver” of the entire system is the operators. The success of a scheme of offer rationalisation, increasingly directed at pinpointing and satisfying the needs of the consumer and, in particular, of the “weak” consumer, starts with the operators. In consequence, an important “effort” is required in awareness-raising and “training” (understood not so much as in the “trade”, as for improving administrative and managerial skills). Indeed, nowadays, a business, however small and “basic” it is, is ever “faster” and ever more complex and, therefore, needs a figure better able to “steer” it along the busy roads of competition.

Given the large number and complexity of the *stakeholders* and of the “levels” of analysis, it is opportune to tackle the issue using an “integrated” approach which takes the perspectives of all “levels” into account and integrates them into a unitary design.

To reach these objectives it is necessary that during the definition and subsequent implementation of strategies, each “local system” operate with a “parallel” process which follows simultaneously a “*top-down*” approach and a constant “*bottom-up*” control (see Figure 1) in order to guarantee the quality and liveability of the places (“*City system*”), and the economic sustainability of the businesses involved (“*Individual operator*”).

Hereinafter, we will develop the three themes identified in the *Draft Strategy: Market governance systems, Infrastructure, services and locational choices and Communication and marketing activities*.

As regards *Market governance systems*, it is necessary to place particular attention on those aspects which concern decision-making processes, involvement of stakeholders and management. The model of governance and its attendant management model significantly influence the choices relating to *Infrastructure, services and locational choices* and, more specifically, the issues concerning the installation and composition of the offer.

Lastly, attention will be focused on the *Communication and marketing activities* which must increasingly be oriented to building, strengthening and communicating the image of markets as places in which commercial activity becomes an essential element in regaining and consolidating identity of place.

### 3) Market governance systems

If one really intends to pursue a goal of restoring competitive strength to markets, of gaining segments of potential visitors, especially young people, who currently represent the “archetypal customers” of the shopping centres, it is essential to overhaul the models of governance. Today, with few and specific exceptions, decision-making power goes hand in hand with regulatory authority and control and is entrusted to the Local Authorities. This almost always leads to the creation of “one size fits all” rules, generating bureaucracy and slowing down the decision-making process, while putting formal control first and paying little attention to the real needs which are manifested.

The process of change, therefore, necessitates flexibility, regulations allowing diversification of strategies and of management policies, the presence of credible interlocutors capable of spurring greater involvement on the part of the operators, and thus moving beyond the dominant individualist vision which handicaps businesses' performances but, above all, reduces both markets' power to attract and their competitive abilities.

On the one hand, many project partners lament the loss of customers, above all young people and young families who are increasingly attracted by shopping centres and, on the other, the difficulty of handling generational change amongst the operators. The only way to tackle the problem is to give a chance to new ideas, to an entrepreneurial class prepared to “bet on the future” and thus to invest in the potential of commerce in public spaces.

It goes without saying that the Institutions must be involved in the definition of lines of development including not only commercial activities but other spheres of public policy: social issues, culture and tourism, sport and nutrition, etc. This requires that there must be a clear distinction between political guidelines and the definition of strategies and operational policies.

#### 3.1) *Systems of governance and decision-making processes.*

Such an approach tends to shift the power to determine the organisation and administration of the retail offer “downwards”, while maintaining “political” choices and guidelines “at the top”. An intermediate level of “systemic” planning would have a role of quality control for the offer in its entirety, and not from a merely commercial point of view either. It is necessary, in fact, to pay special attention to some categories of consumer, particularly the weakest, ensuring that markets continue to perform that “social” function which they very often assume.

In any case, a generalised move towards a new and more up-to-date “model of governance” of markets must tend to simplify regulations, aligning them with the new and differing needs, both of the operators and of the “new consumers”. This involves an inevitable flexibilisation with regard to the identification of operators, the determining of opening times and opening hours, the possibility of broadening the offer through, for example, the inclusion of activities connected to the consumption *in loco* of food products on sale in the markets.

In keeping with the aforementioned considerations, it would be opportune to define a system of governance of the markets which is detached from the political level.

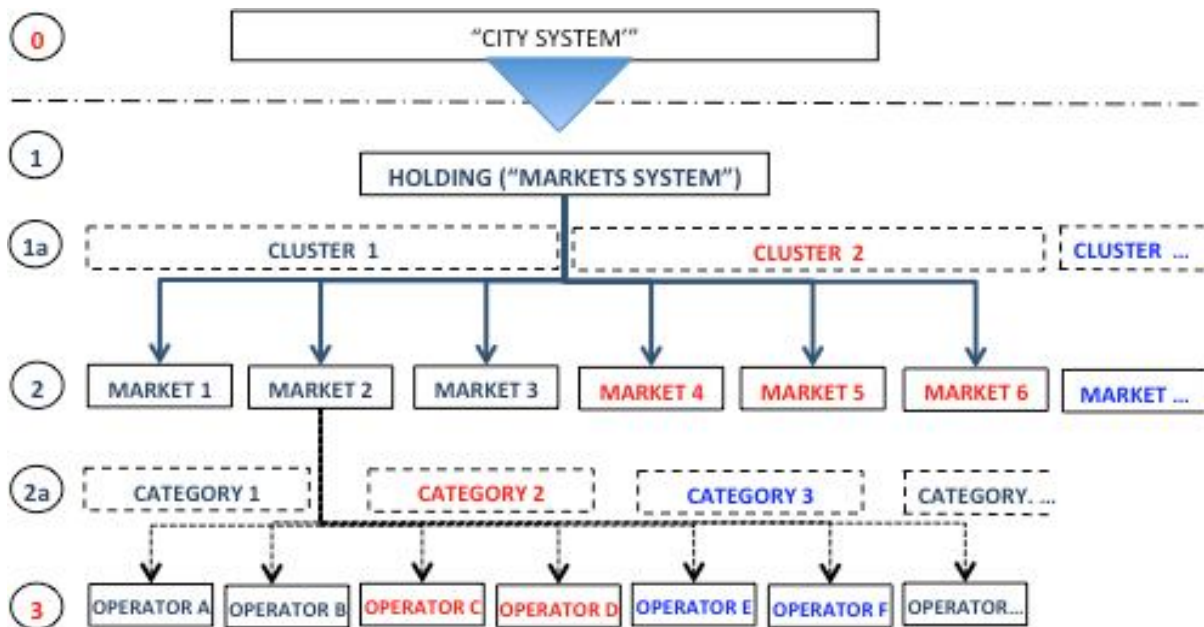
This could come about through the establishment of a holding, which can be a public company or, preferably, a public-private partnership to which to delegate the supervision of the “markets system”.

What is proposed below, and is represented in Figure 2, is one of the many possible hypotheses for the creation of a new organisational model for the markets system. The model, as with all



organisational models, is not valid *erga omnes* but will have to be adapted to the specific local needs.

Figure 2 – An organisational model for the management of markets.



**LEVEL 0: "City System".**

The definition of general regulations (identification of the areas suitable for commerce on public land, procedures for granting licences and determining their duration<sup>9</sup> etc.; compatibility with the policies relating to commerce in general, social issues, culture and tourism, sport and nutrition, etc.) is delegated to the political level.

**LEVEL 1: "Market System".**

Establishment of a mixed capital public-private company to oversee the "markets system" outlining general strategies designed for homogeneous clusters (**Level 1a**). The Holding could be responsible for the general "services" such as: sorting of refuse for recycling purposes (and possibly its disposal); cleaning of sites; pooled purchasing<sup>10</sup> and logistics handling; administrative services (administration of the cost of spaces, accounting, labour contract consultancy, etc.), financial (organisation and handling of POS payments, possible bank guarantees, etc.) and fiscal ones; technical services (maintenance of areas/buildings, of utility connections and supplies of electricity, gas, water, etc.); information system handling (organisation of scheduling/rotas, etc.); communication, promotion and organisation of events and shows concerning the "markets system", professional training, ...

Decision-making power is entrusted to a Board of Directors/Managing Director. The Board of Directors should be composed of a small number of individuals (maximum

<sup>9</sup> In compliance with the general legislation (eg. Bolkestein Directive).

<sup>10</sup> Assuming in some way the role of the "group purchasing organisations" of the large supermarket chains.

7/9) in part appointed by the shareholders and in part independent, appointed by "third" parties (such as Universities, specialist research centres, Associations, etc.).

**LEVEL 2: "Market".**

Individual markets should be autonomous in terms of "operational management": in the identification of the "range of goods" and, hence, in the quali-quantitative definition of the "categories of goods" (Level 2a); in the quality assessment and in the choice of operators with procedures defined in the General Regulations; in the choice of opening times and opening hours agreed upon with Levels 1 and 1a. Individual markets could be responsible for the operational services such as: refuse handling (separation of refuse for recycling purposes), pooled purchasing (coordinated with Level 1); communication and organisation of events and shows concerning individual markets (coordinated with Level 1), etc.

Decision-making power is entrusted to a "General Manager" designated by the Board of Directors and agreed with the "Market Management Board" (composed of a small number of operators). It may be envisaged that the "General Manager" may be in charge of more than one market (the maximum being 2/3) where these are small in size, relatively homogeneous and not in direct competition.

**LEVEL 3: "Operators".**

The operators are required to participate in the decision-making process through the organs of coordination which may be provided for at different levels (1 and 2).

### 3.2) *Stakeholder involvement.*

It has already been stated that to improve the quality and performance of markets, a "common vision" is crucial, as is consequently, the active participation of all parties involved (including new ones which might come into being as the models of Governance evolve). The involvement of the stakeholders must, however, be guided by a logic of joint participation in strategic, organisational and administrative development and not viewed as the "time and place" for making demands, whether individual or collective. Accordingly, the "bodies" which might be created must be few in number, extremely lean, and rapid in the performance of the tasks assigned to them. The aim is to reduce the weight of bureaucracy and to speed up the decision-making processes, and not, of course, to create further superstructures.

Stakeholder involvement can begin as early as the "outline" phase, in the definition of the guidelines which, as previously stated, must involve not only representatives of commerce but also players from civil society, the world of culture and from tourism etc., through the establishment of a "Steering Committee" also composed of representatives of the public authority in the varying roles, by sector experts and by representatives of the sectors involved (retailers, producers, consumers).

One can, moreover, characterise intermediate organs of control and assessment. Here below, merely by way of example, are indicated some:

- *Control of the quality of products, of their origin and provenance.*

Several partners signal among markets' weaknesses the non-traceability of many imported food products. The presence of an organ of control with power to sanction could constitute

an important step forward in the improvement of product quality. A number of partners have already moved in this direction, Venice, for example, is in the process of approving the establishment of a "Control Committee for the direct sale of farm produce". It would be sensible to establish rules and controls on the quality and provenance, not only of food products, but also of non-food goods in order to block entry onto the market of counterfeit products or ones which do not meet quality and safety standards dictated by Community rules<sup>11</sup>.

- *Assessment of the quality and performance of markets and their operators.*

One might consider establishing an Assessment Committee composed of representatives of the Institutions, of consumer organisations and of operators. Periodical assessment of quality and performance of markets can be conducted using a series of quali-quantitative indicators, obtainable through questionnaires administered to customers and operators and through direct accounts regarding, for example: the quality of the stalls, the completeness of the array of goods, product quality, the degree of occupation of spaces (absence of "empty pitches"), the quality of relations among operators and between operators and customers.

The results of these assessments could be used to reward virtuous markets operators, for example through a temporary reduction of the cost of pitches, the supplying of particular services without charge or at favourable rates, etc., but also to sanction those operators whose behaviour damages the *qualities* of the market, and more importantly of damages the trade<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.3) Management.

The repeatedly-mentioned "systemic vision" cannot be developed without moving from a system of individualistic management centred on the characteristics and needs of each individual business, to a logic of strategies and operational choices. There must consequently be an orientation towards medium-long term planning in an approach based on integration and on the sharing of "ideas", strategies and management policies.

The small size of retail businesses (and not only of market traders) together with a strong sense of individualism creates considerable vulnerability, especially when facing competition from the large supermarket chains. These reduced dimensions are often associated with a limited availability of resources, primarily with regard to finance, but also in managerial terms, creating a situation which frequently prevents companies from grasping the opportunities which may present themselves.

Overcoming individualism depends on the sharing of a "common vision": joining together, creating "networks" among operators, can help overcome these vulnerabilities: *if alone we are vulnerable, together we can be strong*.

If a "common vision" is to be developed and controlled, it requires a figure who takes responsibility for guiding and coordinating the individual companies, a strong managerial figure

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<sup>11</sup> The question of traceability will be taken up further in part 5.2.

<sup>12</sup> Normann R., Service Management: Strategy and Leadership in the Service Business, Wiley, 1991, p. 18: "Negative or positive performance by may have a tremendous and immediate impact of how individual customer perceive the quality of what they have been given."

("General Manager"<sup>13</sup>) able to drive the change and orientate the behaviours of individual operators in the efforts to regain competitiveness<sup>14</sup>.

Shifting to a managerial running of the markets would make it possible to develop a series of skills which could prove decisive in enhancing the attractiveness of the markets, not only to consumers, but, above all, to the operators facilitating generational change and encouraging the young to pursue this career path<sup>15</sup>. The inclusion of managerial figures, both general and for the specific functions, can be crucial, just consider the possibility of having a *category manager* able to manage in a professional manner the categories of goods in deciding on assortments and, above all, in relations with suppliers in order to improve the handling of sources of procurement.

One of the aspects which can make the difference, especially where there is, more or less directly, the involvement of Public Authorities, is the development of a strong planning capabilities, to construct innovative projects which can be tested for financeability both by institutional bodies (the European Union is the most significant example of this, though not necessarily the only one) and by private investors. Strong planning capabilities can make it possible to create effective *fundraising programmes* to attract the financial resources necessary for the development of important projects, allowing the process of change to continue. The only course open is to create the necessary conditions of efficiency and effectiveness which can attract investors.

#### **4) Infrastructure, services and locational choices**

A "place of commerce" - and a market is one - must base its policy of development or, sometimes, of survival, on four key elements (the policy of the 4 A's in Italian<sup>16</sup>): *Attrattività* – Attractiveness, *Accessibilità* - Accessibility, *Animazione* - Entertainment and *Ambiente* - Environment. Its success will depend on whether it possesses such characteristics as to justify a journey from where people live (attractiveness), as to make it easy to reach (accessibility), as to be able to improve the quality of social life (entertainment) by succeeding in making a stay in that particular place enjoyable (environment).

Attractiveness, accessibility and the environment are all tightly bound up with aspects of location and of the infrastructure in place but, at the same time, the degree of attraction is closely interrelated with the offer (assortment) which the place is able to provide.

##### **4.1) Logistics and infrastructure**

The revitalisation of markets, or the possible creation of new ones, will have to be considered with particular attention being paid to the "degree of attractiveness" which will be different for "neighbourhood" markets (intended to meet the needs of either the local or the "gravitating" population) when compared to the "specialised" ones (intended to meet differentiated needs: we

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<sup>13</sup> See part 3.1 "Level 2".

<sup>14</sup> The Region of Ústí identifies this question (managerial control of the markets) as a priority, stressing that the markets which succeed in performing well are those in which management is efficient.

<sup>15</sup> Pécs signals among the weaknesses: "Sellers of the markets are rather old, low number of young people choosing this profession".

<sup>16</sup> The references to the policy of the 4 A's are taken from: Regione Piemonte, *I Luoghi del Commercio*, (The Places of Commerce) SOTRECO, 2000, p. 19. The "4A's" will be discussed in the course of this section and the next.



can have markets specialised in *food* or in *non food*, in the latter case the products available are usually of high quality, with strong powers of attraction of their own).

Degrees of attractiveness and accessibility are undoubtedly connected to two other qualifying aspects: locational choices on the one hand and opening times and opening hours on the other.

Locational choices will be based on differing criteria according to whether there is a tendency to favour the development of covered facilities or ones in the open air, with fully equipped pitches, etc. To the ends of creating a “place” which is useable *in toto*, it is opportune to take into account, in locational choices, not only the characteristics of the space available for commercial activities, but also those of the surrounding space. In particular, it is necessary to focus the attention on the existence of, or possibility of providing for, the establishment of a complementary offer whether of a strictly commercial nature (e.g., supermarkets and other retail units with a complementary offer) or not: bars, restaurants, hairdressers, dry cleaners, dressmakers and tailors, shoe repairers, tradesmen (plumbers, electricians, etc.), but also post offices and banks, public services (e.g. local municipal offices for the public, etc.). Not least, it is extremely important for there to be meeting points, clubs, etc. and/or spaces available for cultural and recreational activities.

As mentioned on a number of occasions, the place must be accessible, accessible not only to “customers” but also to the operators. Often this aspect can create situations of inconvenience both for the local population (in particular with the markets on squares or in streets in residential areas) and for local traffic. Operators must be able to dispose of adequate space to set up and take down their stalls as well as of dedicated spaces for the “storeroom”, parking spaces for vehicles, possibly nearby but not adjacent to the stall, in order to avoid the sight of a long stretch of vans parked beside the stall. The availability of premises, which can serve as storerooms in the immediate proximity of the market areas, could be extremely useful especially where specific storage facilities could be put in place, consider the importance of making of available refrigerated cold stores for the conservation of foodstuffs. The presence of areas of warehousing would, moreover, make it possible to pool logistics management and, at least in part, purchasing, thus producing both economic benefits for the operators and positive externalities arising from the reduction of the number of vehicles circulating, from the opportunity to manage transport and related logistical activities over a broader time frame, and to utilize electrically-powered vehicles, etc.

On the consumers' side, the question of accessibility is closely connected to traffic conditions and to the availability of parking. Often, however, the location of markets, especially in the centre of historic towns, presents objective difficulties of access and parking for private traffic<sup>17</sup>. It is therefore essential to enhance public transport services in quantitative terms (an adequate number of routes and of vehicles), certainly, but above all “qualitatively” by linking, for example, the “places” of commerce with transport interchange parking areas, by operating opening hours and public transport timetables reflecting opening times and consequent “traffic” flows generated in market areas, etc. The last mile, in any case, could also be covered on other means of transport. Many cities have, in recent times, developed *bike sharing* services: bicycle travel could be an excellent tool which could be appreciated by younger people too, as well as being useful for “moving tourists”.

To improve the competitiveness of markets it is definitely necessary to create ease of access, but “quality” of place must not be neglected in consequence. It has been noted that *the environment*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> It goes without saying that the considerations which follow must be related to the urbanistic and territorial characteristics of each city.

<sup>18</sup> Please refer to Regione Piemonte, *I Luoghi del Commercio*, (The Places of Commerce) SOTRECO, 2000, p. 65 and following.



is one of the key factors in the success of “places” of commerce. It must inspire safety and display an absence of threats<sup>19</sup> providing not merely a pleasant aesthetic and visual experience, but highlighting those social and symbolic factors which make of many market areas, in particular in the centres of historic towns, special meeting places.

If in an artificial shopping centre the environment is “constructed”, in a square or in a street the sounds and colours depend on the physical structures and on the people who naturally frequent and relate to that particular urban space<sup>20</sup>. Obviously, it is also possible to intervene to reconfigure it, but this requires considerable time and frequently hard-to-come-by resources, especially from Public Authorities. The presence of a public-private body and an autonomy of management in the markets might both allow those resources necessary for plans and projects of regeneration to be activated and implemented<sup>21</sup>, and reduce completion times.

One aspect on which it is necessary to focus with the utmost care is the *layout* of the market and with it an attention to the points of entry and to the positioning of the *key tenants*. Very often too little attention is paid to the “doors” to the market” which will necessarily differ according to market type: closed, covered, linear, on a square, etc. The “door” of entry must attract persons to enter, and so particular care must be taken in its creation. Along the main access routes areas equipped with benches, safe-deposit boxes for the use of the customers, shopping trolleys, adequate toilet facilities, etc. should be provided. Where fixed stalls are not present or cannot be envisaged, simple easy-to-reposition mobile structures might be created.

A further key element in increasing the degree of attractiveness of markets is a correct positioning of the *key tenants*. Just as the different sections of the hypermarket are intended to pilot the customer on a course which has him or her remain in contact with the products for as long as possible, so too in markets the leading operators must be positioned in such a way as to fully exploit their powers of attraction to the benefit of the entire market.

Mention has already been made to the importance, for the competitiveness of the markets, of a correct management of opening times and of opening hours: the matter is paramount and must be dealt with catering to the specific needs of each single market.

Having the same opening days and opening hours obviously does nothing to improve the service provided or the performances of markets. Differentiating opening times makes it possible to cover longer opening hours and thus allows those whose working hours coincide with regular market opening times to access the market and thus to create the conditions for operators to increase their volumes of business. In addition, managing opening hours is broadly conditioned by the characteristics of the market itself: a covered market, including restaurants and bars or cafes, will have different needs from a street market in a densely-populated area and with relatively little by way of complementary offer.

Many project partners indicate the extension of opening hours as a priority, even if this can sometimes involve difficulties for operators (need for extra staff in order to ensure coverage of extended opening hours, for example). Alternatively, the various markets could operate diversified hours, variable over the course of the days.

Obviously, in this case, it is imperative that working days and opening hours be clearly communicated by means of appropriate noticeboards, though not solely, which can be placed at

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<sup>19</sup> The issue of safety and of the fight against petty crime is an issue highlighted by various partners and for some it represents a priority.

<sup>20</sup> Obviously different is the case of covered markets which can benefit from the opportunities arising from the homogeneity of the place's features.

<sup>21</sup> The question will be taken up in part 5.

the points of entry. The importance of communication will be taken up again in greater detail in part 5, however, at this point, it is worth highlighting the key role that an efficient information system for markets can play as a communication tool and, above all, as a support for management processes<sup>22</sup>. For example, one aspect indicated, on various sides, as problematic and yet increasingly fundamental in compliance with new financial rules, is the growing use of plastic money, and, consequently, the need on the part of operators to equip themselves with POS systems.

Last, but not least, is the question of refuse and of the cleaning of the market areas. It is to be hoped that attention to an appropriate management of refuse disposal will develop further, as refuse can increasingly represent a “resource”. The enhancement of refuse does indeed depend on it being sorted for recycling purposes but, above all, it is a question of a change in the “culture of refuse”, in short handling and disposal of refuse must no longer be thought of as a generator of costs but rather as a resource which can generate value. Waste - consider in this regard fruit and vegetables (and their packaging/presentation) - can be salvaged and put to new uses (transformation, use in day care centres and other care facilities, etc.). Obviously, for this to happen, it is necessary to think of a unified management of the refuse produced by markets, and this could be one of the prerogatives of the body managing the “markets system”.

#### 4.2) Offer

It was stated at the beginning of this section that the capacity to attract correlates, on the one hand, with locational aspects and infrastructure in place locally and, on the other, with the offer (selection) which the “place” affords.

One of the key aspects of a strategy for the markets must therefore regard the “spectrum of choice” in terms of breadth and depth of range, but this must not be divorced from the overall offer which the “place” is able to present. The composition of the market's assortment must therefore also be defined in relation to the breadth and depth of the offer in shops. The optimisation of the offer should be guided by the public authority through appropriate policies of incentivisation/disincentivisation regarding the establishment of specific types of businesses, not only retail but also, as previously mentioned, restaurants, bars, hairdressers, shoe repairers, tradesmen, etc.

The planning of the markets' range of products, quantitative and qualitative choices concerning the categories of goods, must therefore be coherent with the local supply system.

A strong rooting in the local area will tend to favour the «local offering»<sup>23</sup> which, for food products, represents a guarantee of freshness and a return to the “seasonality” of produce, while for non-food products it can represent a strong element in the relaunching of local production (custom manufacturing, industrial, etc.) and an important barrier to the proliferation of the offer of counterfeit products/brands.

Orientation in favour of the local offer does not exclude, but rather increases the importance of “imported” goods. These products are often brought to market by immigrants who not only represent an important share of the demand, but also a guarantee of quality of the product knowing, as they do, the provenance and, on occasion, they themselves being direct importers.

<sup>22</sup> An interesting model of an information system in support of management processes for markets is presented in the proposal for of reelaboration of the markets plan of the City of Torino made by the Politecnico of Torino.

<sup>23</sup> By *local offer* we mean to refer to products typical of “local habits” (not only food habits), and not simply to goods “produced locally”.

The “glocalisation” of the offer, particularly as regards food, which brings together local products and ethnic and global ones, represents a fundamental vehicle of competitive advantage for markets contributing, at one and the same time, to the rounding out of the offer and to the process of cultural and social integration of migrant populations<sup>24</sup>.

These considerations suppose a significant broadening of the “potential” spectrum of stakeholders, as there would be an encompassing of, on the one hand, local production systems looking to develop “business networks” operating along the entire supply chain, and on the other, the cooperation with production systems as yet not particularly developed but which could benefit greatly from a strategy of integration and, consequently, of inclusion.

It is possible to envisage business networks along the produce supply chain which would involve producers, transformers and the “markets system” with the aim of shortening the supply chain and improving the control of both product origin and quality. This would benefit not only the retailers whose costs of procurement would be reduced, but also the operators at the top of the chain who could manage their own production and distribution processes better. This approach could be adopted in other sectors, in textiles, for instance, but in others too, to create further local synergies.

Furthermore, joint international projects (with the participation of the various “market systems”) in supporting quality production in developing countries, and which could be marketed on “every square”.

Developing integrated projects with suppliers can bring strong gains in quality and in the differentiation of the offer, just consider the possibility of identifying lines of branded products (private label) which could lead to the development of a specific “brand”. In addition, a direct relationship with suppliers can generate economies of scale with considerable economic effects in terms of purchasing prices: optimisation of logistics, stock management, etc. These points taken together are not intended to bring about a standardisation of products (all selling the same goods), but rather to develop the possibility of differentiating the offer to make it more competitive.

Lastly, many partners indicate the important role that *street food* can play in enhancing markets' offers. The possibility of consuming market products on the spot would make it possible to appreciate the quality directly and to eat in a more informal, quicker and less costly fashion than in bars or restaurants while being able to shop. Street food can be prepared, in accordance with the regulations of hygiene and food safety, in the same stalls or in kiosks, fixed or mobile, appropriately positioned. One could even think of making *street food* prepared with produce sold in the markets available through vending machines, a phenomenon currently in strong expansion in stations, places of work, schools and hospitals, positioned in specific areas, for instance, in proximity of parking and rest areas, and furnished with benches, fountains etc. for the use of visitors to the markets.

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<sup>24</sup> The importance of increasing the availability of local and ethnic products in the offer of the markets was expressed by project partners in their entirety.



## 5) Communication and marketing activities

The market is simultaneously a public product and a complex private entity and, as such, it is necessary that both the Public Administration and, the retail operators make all efforts to make the public aware of its qualities and to nurture it<sup>25</sup>.

One of the problems highlighted by project partners lies right there, in the scarcity, where not complete absence, of suitable marketing and communication policies. Many have also moved to rectify this through the pilot projects which have been set up as part of the CENTRAL MARKETS project and important results have been produced. Much, however, remains to be done, particularly in those situations where there is a large number of markets and a strong diversification among them: often the consumer “does not know” the market, and on occasion he does not even know of its existence, while more often he does not know its exact location, its opening hours, much less the offer and any promotions.

The use of technology, through an opening up to social networks for example, represents an unavoidable path also, as mentioned more than once, in attracting young people - young consumers - but above all young operators able to bring new life to the markets.

In point of fact, communication will be even more effective if, together with the market, it also involves the surrounding shopping streets and cultural and recreational centres, in short, the local area in which it operates.

One way to make markets known, to publicise their quality, is obviously to create a *brand*, a mark of quality to safeguard both consumers and operators. The quality of the market depends though on the quality of the offer, as has already been mentioned, and it is essential that this quality is appropriately communicated and the best communication is to guarantee the traceability of the products highlighting, with no room for confusion, its origin and provenance.

We have mentioned above that of the four factors at the root of the success of a place of commerce, and in it of a market, entertainment assumes a particular role. Entertainment understood as the combination of actions and activities which develop in a place providing pleasant sensations for the visitor, allowing him to socialise and live new experiences and share them with others.

### 5.1) Branding

It has been reiterated a number of times that one of the keys to the success of markets is the overcoming of individualism and a move to a model of shared management. This change requires appropriate marketing and communication tools such as to strengthen, on the one hand, “unity” among operators and, on the other, a correct identification of the consumer. In this regard, the possibility of availing oneself of a “symbol” to guarantee the quality of the “product market” is an important factor. The “market”, not only the single one, but the “system”, must raise its own level of quality and guarantee it through appropriate rules, behaviours and “symbols”. In this way, one can envisage the creation of hallmarks on a number of levels which can identify the “markets system”, the “individual market” and the “families of goods”. These symbols can be, moreover, represented, for example, by the aesthetic harmony of the stalls, by colour coding for categories of goods, etc.

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<sup>25</sup> Regione Piemonte, *Il commercio su aree pubbliche*, (Commerce on Public Land) Quaderni di ricerca, n. 24, 1998, p 177.

Being awarded a mark of quality would allow markets to present themselves in a different light to customers, to the local population and to tourists who could be attracted by this symbol. This requires operators to display adequate professionalism and quality of management. It is therefore crucial to put in place appropriate training paths which provide operators not only with the knowledge of the “trade”, already in their possession, but also with those managerial and technological skills which are increasingly required of those who run a business, whatever its size. The strength of a brand also depends on its ability to gain the customer's loyalty, with this in mind just think, for example, of the possibility of creating loyalty cards useable not only in the individual markets, but extendable to the whole “system”. It would be no bad thing if “points” or dedicated promotions could be obtained in all the markets of Europe which share the brand values.

### *5.2) Product traceability*

The symbols referred to are also key elements in guaranteeing the traceability of products. Knowledge not only of provenance, but also of who is involved in the various stages of the process bringing the product to the consumer, is an aspect which is increasingly sought after by the discerning consumer. A short supply chain, the favouring of local products or ones from “controlled supply chains”, and an efficient purchasing policy are all important in guaranteeing not merely traceability, but also the “quality of the supply chain”.

The key element in ensuring that this happens, is the operator, who must pay the greatest attention to quality and origin when procuring goods for sale. When making a sale from his stall, the operator must indeed be in a position to provide the customer with clear information, and thus to contribute to overcoming those prejudices, which come to the surface now and again, about the poor quality and/or unknown provenance of the products sold in the market.

### *5.3) Identity of “place”*

Every place possesses distinctive features which constitute its identity. Markets too must possess an identity which makes them recognisable. However, not all markets have succeeded, over the years, in creating and consolidating an identity which the consumer is able to recognise, and they actually risk being perceived as anonymous places which tend to be reduced, in the consumer's mind, to a number of stalls in a public space. It is essential that each market, large or small, central or peripheral, be capable of creating its own identity, based on the predominant characteristics relating to location, to the function performed and to its target population. This identity may be based on the specialisation of the offer, on the usability of the place, on safety but, above and beyond this, it is crucial that its uniqueness be adequately communicated to the consumer.

### *5.4) Gathering “place”*

The market has here been identified as a “place of commerce”, but not only this. The market's setting must be increasingly identified as a “place” of relations between “individuals”, and as such it must be a place which is liveable, both in terms of its infrastructure and of the services of which it disposes, as well as in terms of the initiatives which can be implemented there. The entertainment must therefore be considered on the basis of the market's physical and social environment. The possibility of having structures (whether fixed or mobile) which offer *street*



food, spaces suitable for performances by street artists (jugglers, musicians, etc.) in the market area can revitalise the place and simultaneously represent an important element of socialisation. Mention has been made previously of the importance of the environment, the quality of the place. This is definitely a further element which strengthens the identity of the place, but it is necessary to make sure that interventions on street furniture, on facilities, do not create the opposite effect, that is to say, to lose the specific characteristics of the place. A correctly-dosed mixture of tradition and innovation must be at the core of planning choices designed to regenerate market areas.

The identity and quality of the place must make of it a “gathering place”, but not simply an *intragenerational* one, as often happens. The market must be, above all, an intergenerational gathering place: it cannot be perceived, and must not be chosen, as a place for the exclusive use of the elderly population, it should, on the contrary, be remodulated to make it a place to be used and enjoyed by all, and especially by young people and families.

Most partners identify qualifying factors in the creation of cultural events, of cookery courses, food and wine tasting courses, and other activities designed to strengthen the culture of quality food. Expo 2015, dedicated to sustainable food production and nutrition could be a perfect opportunity to strengthen the traditions and cultures of agricultural produce which find their synthesis in the markets.

## Conclusions

As stated on several occasions, markets are not, and cannot be considered a “collection of retail concerns” (worse still a “collection of stalls”), but rather a “system” of services within a broader territorial context.

Strategies and policies for markets must therefore be integrated into development policies for the *places* by pursuing two objectives: increasing capacities to satisfy “internal customers”, understood as the *gravitating population* (residents, in particular the “weak” segments, other persons who work or study in the place, etc.) and to develop power to attract “external customers”, be they residents in the same geographical area (city or metropolitan areas), but above all, tourists who are ever more in search of experiences which integrate them – albeit for the brief period of their stay – in the specificities of the place in which they find themselves.

All this requires an “integrated vision” capable of “accommodating”, moving beyond the commercial framework and broadening horizons at the top of the “system of services”. This new vision must possess, moreover, a strong capacity to attract, but also, and perhaps above all, it must be “inclusive”. Inclusion of the local or gravitating population (consider a public services and/or private initiatives in favour of the elderly, families, disadvantaged individuals) but also those who, for various reasons “frequent the place” and can find there amusement, catering, etc.

It is crucial then to find the best communication for these places of which markets can, and rather must, be the heartbeat. Communication must therefore be “informative” but also, and increasingly, “reinforcing” of the image and of the specificities of place. The presence of interactive services (websites, apps, etc.) can definitely represent a formidable model of rationalisation and of growth of markets and of the territory in which they live. The power of technology must also be directed to a constant improvement of management processes and in this respect it is essential that there be an integrated information system which allows for a strong recovery of efficiency and the enhancement of the service towards the customer.

All stakeholders must participate in this process, each on the basis of his skills, with a view to creating a network and to developing those synergies which alone can lead to a significant recovery of competitiveness of urban areas with respect to the “artificial places”.

This important change must be initiated by the Public Administration which must draw up guidelines and lean, simple-to-apply regulations with a drastic reduction in bureaucracy. At the same time they must activate highly efficient systems of control serving to reward virtuous behaviours and to sanction any behaviour not in keeping with defined standards.

If it must begin with the Public Authorities through an overhaul of the model of governance and the arrangement of a flexible regulatory system, the process of change must reach the operators who must be prepared to put themselves on the line, perhaps by modifying their own models of business, in an attempt to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their own management but, above all, the efficiency and effectiveness of the markets at a “systemic” level.

The process of change must be guided and oriented in the right direction taking into account the expectations of all the stakeholders without, however, allowing themselves to be influenced by specific interests. To this end, it is essential that the system and the individual markets have competent and authoritative management.

Attractiveness and “quality” are terms repeated over and again and are the basic objectives. These objectives must, however, be developed on a broader horizon: the “places” of the city with their “beauties” - and amongst these could quite rightly be included “places of commerce” - must possess a power to attract not only with reference to the “local market” (resident or gravitating population), but also to broaden the horizon to the “tourist market” which in some cities is already highly developed, while in others it is at the centre of significant policies of strengthening.

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